

Young People's Societies

OUR CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

Topic for Sunday, December 19: Our Christmas Gifts.
Matthew 2:1-11.

DAILY READINGS.

Monday: God's Gift to us. 2 Corinthians 9:15.

Tuesday: Christ's gift—Himself. Ephesians 5:25-27.

Wednesday: The heart to God. Proverbs 23:23-26.

Thursday: The life to service. Romans 15:1-5.

Friday: Substance to the poor. 1 John 3:17-19.

Saturday: Ourselves to Christ. Matthew 4:18-22.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." That is the greatest gift, God's gift to us. And with him, "how shall he not freely give us all things?"

"Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." This is Christ's gift—himself. There could be no richer gift."

"My son, give me thine heart." This is our best gift to God. It will please him. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus." This is the finest gift of believer to believer, a loving, Christ-like spirit.

"I beseech you that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The gift of faithful service is reasonable. God has a right to it. The world has a right to witness it.

"Freely ye have received, freely give." This is the proper spirit of the giver. Moved by a sense of his own blessedness in receiving freely, he should dispense with an equally free hand. The appreciative, grateful heart will want to give.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is the spirit which should animate all givers. "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, for they can not recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the judgment of the just."

"They first gave their own selves to the Lord." This was the Macedonians method of making offerings to Christ and his church. They threw themselves into the collection, body, heart, and life. This made it very easy for them to give their substance as well.

The Christmas season has come to be a great giving season. Doubtless the idea and habit were developed by the thought of God's gift to men. It would be well for us if we would try to conform to the divine method and spirit throughout and make the season such as he would have it.

The joy of giving is the sweetest that man can have. Prompted by high motives, it reacts upon the giver's own soul and enlarges it. Giving time ought to be a happy time. A joyous Christmas will not offend the heavenly Giver. It will not hurt the one who has it.

The Wise Men from the East brought gifts and laid them at the infant Jesus' feet. The length of the journey deterred them not. The interruption at Jerusalem turned them not back. The poverty of the Lord's family and the humility of his surroundings cast no shadow upon their expedition. They deemed Christ worthy of the very best they could bring.

The shepherds left their flocks and came and worshipped at his manger cradle. The heavenly hosts filled the vaulted canopy over the earth and joined in a mighty chorus, "Peace on earth; good will to men." May not we bring our hearts to him as well, and let our voices catch up the refrain of the angel's song and bear it out to the world which needs to hear its melody and grace?

I felt once that I was responsible for the conduct of universal affairs, but I have recently come to believe otherwise. So long as I tried to run the world I was miserable; it makes me happy now to trust in God.—Lyman Beecher.

Prayer Meeting

"HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE."

Week Beginning December 12. 1 John 5:11-14.

This evangelist was graciously endowed with remarkable insight into spiritual truth. He does not impress us as arriving at truth so much by argument as by holy intuition. He perceives it clearly, grasps it with vigor and states it in concise and positive terms. Instead of assembling proofs he appeals to Christian consciousness and says, "We Know." His appeal is to the record that God gave of his Son and he affirms that he that believeth not this record "hath made God a liar," a consequence from which all who challenge our Lord's true divinity may well recoil as from a fearful blasphemy.

In the passage selected for our study the evangelist declares that the central truth of this record is "that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." He then announces the ultimate and vital test of Christian character in the words, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

This repetition of the same cardinal truth expressed in another form because viewed from another angle, is exceedingly and solemnly suggestive. It is as though he had here reached a point which marked the dividing of the ways; a point when men make a decision between life and death. Here they are subjected to a test that is crucial and final. They may differ or be in error on minor questions of faith and practice, and being sincere they may yet be reckoned among the saved, but here is a question of doctrine and of faith which is decisive. Eternal life is in Christ and if we have Christ as a divine Redeemer we have that life and if we have not Christ we have not eternal life.

We are living at a time when this vital doctrine is being assailed. Such is the state of liberty of opinion and toleration of glaring error that professedly Christian teachers, in good standing in the churches, are repudiating the gospel of atonement through the infinite merits of the Son of God and are teaching another gospel of personal merit under the operation of the natural laws of ethical development. This is a phase of the philosophy and vain deceit against which Paul warns when he says: "Take heed lest there should be any one that maketh a spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ, for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power."

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The life is a present, as it is a permanent and eternal, possession. As a present possession it is not perfect. It is real and imperishable, but it is immature and attended with infirmity and blemishes. It may be called geominal in character, awaiting gradual development and final maturity in the life that is beyond. It pertains to the superior nature of man; that is the spiritual and not the bodily. The body is the abode of that life and is therefore holy but the life of the body perishes. This spiritual life does not involve the abandonment of the natural life of the soul. Natural and spiritual qualities and phenomena may dwell together and do. Nor is it independent of natural bodily attributes but rather sanctifies these and consecrates them to righteous purposes.

In verse 13, John tells why this epistle was written: Namely, that in the reception and experience of the truths which he made known, the true believers might know that they had eternal life and that they might be confirmed in their faith in the Son of God. Here are some important reflections suggested. One is, that it is our privilege and therefore our duty to know that we have eternal life. The Christian who lives in trepidation or doubt on this point is not living the ideal life in John's opinion. He rang the changes on the words, "That ye May Know" and "We Know." He believed in the doctrine of assurance of grace and salvation.

Another thought is that instruction is in order to this as-